

The Ballarat Naturalist

May 2018



Excursion to Raglan and “Stoneleigh”, 8 April

On a beautiful autumn day about 15 FNCB members met in Beaufort and were led by Elizabeth and Denis Thurgood along to 643 Main Lead Road which was the address of the property, *Belmont*. We were met by the present owner, Jo (Jocelyn Reid) who is the great-granddaughter of the original owner, James Frazer Watkin, an English engineer who settled there in 1858.

More information about the history of the homestead is available <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/95>



After introductions and a cuppa by the lily pond near the homestead (above) Jo led the way to the Fiery Creek Main Lead diggings which is on her property. The vegetation of this diggings is typical of extensively worked goldmining area. The coppiced trees have regrown with very little undergrowth because of the gravel, stones and lack of soil covering the area. With a closer look a variety of trees and plants were found. (See lists page 4-5)

Among the gold-mining workings of these shallow alluvial diggings was evidence of much sluicing. Scattered throughout the area were partly filled-in mine shafts and the accompanying piles of gravel produced from the sluicing. We also saw the circular dugouts which were the remains of the puddling activity. Remains of races (drains) which carried the water for the workings run through the area. Some lower-lying areas were the locations of dams.

For lunchtime the Thurgoods invited us into a large cool space in their beautifully- renovated house in Beaufort. Cuppa was generously provided and some of us were given a grand tour of the house.

At Belmont, the Franc's have fenced off a few hundred metres of the stream which flows out of a spring close to the homestead of Pretty Towers (See photo below). They still allow their cattle to drink from the elongated dam which has formed, via an enclosure which is stoned-based to prevent the water becoming muddied.



Trees which were planted have grown up on one side of the dam and for much of the dam, reeds are growing in it all of which attracts many birds. One large flock of Plumed Whistling-Duck was resting on the far bank and the other large flock of mainly Grey Teal was sitting on the water and these often took off but returned soon afterwards. See the list of birds made from our sightings which are quite different from lists made at other years and seasons.

To top off a great day, the Thurgoods took us to the nearby hillside where renowned 19th century artist Eugene von Guerard made a sketch for his painting of the pastoral view including the Stoneleigh Homestead of that time. Many thanks for Elizabeth and Denis for their time and for sharing their extensive local knowledge.

Fran Hanrahan



Denis Thurgood posing as von Guerard's model

FNCB Excursion to Belmont – 8 April 2018
Fiery Creek Diggings area
with Mrs Jocelyn Read of Belmont

Trees

Acacia acinacea (Gold-dust Wattle)
A. baileyana (Cootamandra Wattle – NSW weed)
A. decurrens (Early Black Wattle – NSW weed)
A. genistifolia (Spreading Wattle)
A. longifolia (Sallow Wattle – E coast - weed)
A. melanoxylon (Blackwood)
A. mearnsii (Black Wattle – glands irregular)
A. paradoxa (Hedge Wattle)
A. pycnantha (Golden Wattle)

Eucalyptus aromaphloia (Scent-bark)
E. baxteri (Brown Stringybark)
E. dives (Broad-leaf Peppermint)
E. goniacalyx (Long-leaf Box)
E. macrorhyncha (Red Stringybark)
E. meliodora (Yellow Box)
E. obliqua (Messmate Stringybark)
E. rubida (Candlebark)

Exocarpus cupressiformis (Cherry Ballart)

Grasses and Strappy-leaved plants

Aira sp. (Silvery Hair-grass – weed)
Briza sp. (Quaking Grass)/Shell Grass)
Dianella revoluta (Black-anther Flax Lily)
Juncus sp. (Rush)
Lomandra filiformis (Wattle Mat-rush)
Luzula sp. (Wood-rush)
Poa sieberiana (Grey Tussock Grass)
Rytidosperma pallidum (Red-anther Wallaby Grass)

Herbs /shrubs / ferns

Acrotriche serrulata (Honey-pots)
Astroloma humifusum (Cranberry Heath)
Bossiaea prostrata (Creeping Bossiaea)
Correa reflexa (Common Correa)
Davesia leptophylla (Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea)
Daviesia ulicifolia ssp ulicifolia (Gorse Bitter-pea)
Goodenia lanata (Trailing Goodenia)
Hypericum gramineum (Small St John's Wort)
Leptospermum myrsinoides (Silky Tea-tree)
Opercularia varia (Variable Stinkweed)
Pelargonium rodneyanum (Magenta Storksbill)
Podolobium procumbens (Trailing Shaggy-pea)
Pteridium esculentum (Austral Bracken)
Thysanotus patersonii (Twining Fringe Lily)
Ulex europeaus (Gorse / Furze – Woody weed)

Semi-parasitic on Eucalyptus

Amyema pedula ssp. pendula (Hanging Mistletoe)



“Stoneleigh” birds - compared

Birds sighted by Les Hanrahan
04/06/2017

Purple Swamp Hen
Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot
Grey Teal
Australian Shelduck
Little Pied Cormorant
Black Duck
Welcome Swallow
Black-fronted Dotterel
Blue-winged Parrot
Willy Wagtail
HH Grebe
Black Swan
Little Raven
Australian Magpie
Red Wattlebird

Birds sighted by FNCR
08/04/2018

Plumed Whistling-Duck
Spotted Crake
Red-knee Dotterel
Pink-eared Duck
Hoary-headed Grebe
✓ Little Pied Cormorant
Chestnut Teal
✓ Willy Wagtail
Masked Lapwing
✓ Purple Swamp Hen
✓ Dusky Moorhen
✓ Eurasian Coot
✓ Grey Teal
✓ Australian Shelduck
✓ Black Duck
✓ Welcome Swallow
✓ Black-fronted Dotterel
✓ Blue-winged Parrot
✓ Little Raven
Black-tailed Native Hen
✓ Australian Magpie

(Items ticked appear in both lists)



Plumed Whistling-Duck (Dendrocygna eytoni)

Bird List - Belmont

Crimson Rosella
Eastern Spinebill
Scarlet Robin
White-throated Tree
Creeper



Scarlet Robin (Petroica boodang)

President John Gregurke attended a meeting of Friends of Canadian corridor to hear David Smith speak about the threat *Phytophthora cinnamomi* presents to the health of Woowookarung Regional Park.

David is Forest Biosecurity Officer, Forest Pathologist, Entomologist and Chief Plant Health Officer Unit for Biosecurity, Agriculture, Food and Fibre in the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

Phytophthora cinnamomi is a soil pathogen which spreads in soil and water. Symptoms resemble chronic drought – leaves yellow and then turn brown; pale to dark brown discoloration under the bark of the stem and roots. Indirect effects include impacts on insects and small animals that would normally inhabit the ground cover and understory plants (which may be killed).

Sources of infection include pedestrians, machinery, water, gravel, recreation (motor bikes and bicycles), animals and nursery stock.

Long term study in Gippsland using seed collected from a severely infected area sown back into the same area indicated some plants have some degree of resistance.

Parks Victoria contracted Biosis to map grasstree cover and areas of dieback in WRP. This information will be used to plan management methods to reduce the spread.

Thanks to John Gregurke and Paul Norquay for this information

Extracts from Meeting Minutes for April 6, 2018

Attendance: 31 members; Apologies: Peter & Claire Dalman, Peter & Emily Noble, Roy Pails, Mark Moravec, Anna Baulch and Genny Binns.

Correspondence: IN

From Susan Kruss, notification that her research paper featuring late FNCB member Pat Murphy & others is now published on-line in *Muelleria*.

From DELWP: launch of Biodiversity Response Planning, a key component of Protecting Victoria's Environment- Biodiversity 2037.

From Central Highlands Water: seeking input to contribute to development of a new Parks and Recreation Masterplan strategy via online survey.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report: Opening bal.: \$7,387.66; Income \$627.00

Expenses \$264.50; Closing bal.: \$7,750.16

John P. reported that 4 field nats attended a road-test for a guide developed for high school students to collect data on soil & vegetation characteristics that could be affected by different burning regimes. They used the guide to collect and assess samples in the field, then gave feedback on ease of use, content, method & results and made suggestions for improvement. Overall, the guide is a useful scientific tool & will be a good introduction to applied science for Year 9, 10 and 11 students.

Marie K. reported on Re-launch of Climate Watch, explaining that the intention of the program is to record a variety of "firsts" (arrivals, departures, flowering, leaf fall, nest building, mating, etc.) in order to gather reliable data on ecological changes in response to climate change. Although there is much anecdotal evidence, there is very little hard, scientific data to support it. Marie urged field nats to get involved and start reporting and inputting data via the ClimateWatch app.

Yarrowee Leigh Flow Committee: Tim Fletcher was unable to attend this meeting, but he did make a submission on behalf of FNCB that apparently upset some people. He suggested that water coming from urban areas should not be considered environmental flow due to issues such as timing of the flows and quality of the water. The committee will continue to tackle these and other related issues.

Steve Sorrell reported that the Joint Mineralogical Societies of Australia was holding their annual symposium in June and that it will be in Ballarat. A good opportunity for field nats to get along. Steve will make sure Emily gets the information to pass on to members soon. (See notice on page 8)

General Business:

Smart Living Ballarat Farmer's Market: FNCB has a promotional stand on April 14 from 9am to 1pm. There was an opportunity to sign up for an hour or two on the Roster of volunteers. Carol Hall will bring a PC with photos for slideshow. Bill Elder will bring his insect collection. (ed. Unfortunately this event was cancelled due to bad weather)

Grant application – John Petheram has applied for a Biodiversity On-ground Action Community Volunteer Action grant from DELWP to primarily cover costs for FNCB to continue vegetation monitoring at Woowookarung Regional Park. Thanks to John for his work on this.



Phytophthora cinnamomi protection in the field via application of methylated spirits, chlorine or 'Phytoclean'.

See page 7 for more

Show & Tell/Field Reports

Elsbeth S. – took a bus trip run by the Art Gallery of Ballarat to visit Eugene von Guerard sites, particularly Camperdown and Mt Elephant. They visited some homesteads in the area as well as the Education Centre at Mt Elephant and even saw some broilgas. She recommends field nats to keep an eye out for the next trip and book early.

John M. – Visited Apollo Bay recently. At Blanket Bay, there was a huge amount of kelp thrown up from recent storms and he found six dead Fairy (Little Blue) Penguins amongst the debris. Also on 3rd April at Skenes Creek saw White phase of Grey Goshawk.

Andy A. – At Spring Hill, grand-daughter found a bush cricket on verandah – identified by entomologist via Bowerbird as *Torbia perfecta*, a Bush Katydid that mimics a green gum leaf (see below)

Andy also reported that Gayle Osborne of Little Hampton had an Antechinus, but not the common *A. agilis*. Andy identified it as *A. flavipes*, Yellow-footed Antechinus, a rare record for the area.

Wayne M. – spied 17 Black kites flying low over Mt Buninyong, also a Golden Whistler.

Margaret T. had Southern Brown Tree-frogs under her bird-bath.

John G. visiting Halls Gap, found Parson's Bands orchids *Eriochilus cucullata* in forest.



Bush Katydid
(*Torbia perfecta*)

CALENDAR 2018

May

Fri 4 *From glaciers to volcanoes - shaping Ballarat's landscape:*
David Horwood, FNCB

Sat 5 excursion - *Roadside geology - Ballarat to Bacchus Marsh:*
David Horwood, FNCB

Tues 22 Committee meeting - at John Petheram's

June

Fri 1 *Fantastic Fungi:* Les Hanrahan, FNCB

Sun 3 excursion - *Fungi Foray* led by Les Hanrahan, Venue TBA

Tues 24 Committee meeting TBA

Committee

President	John Gregurke
Vice Pres	Fran Hanrahan
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Les Hanrahan
	Andy Arnold
	Bill Elder
	Val Hocking
	John Petheram
	Elsbeth Swan

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Bill Elder

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Meetings are held at Federation University Gillies St Campus on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Leave from the carpark of Federation University Gillies St Campus at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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